

7) Sea turtles are one of the few animals which eat Man-of-Wars. Their shells and scales keep them from being stung, but they must feed with their eyes closed.

iv

There are always Man-of-Wars around Galveston, but they're usually rare, and you can usually see them coming. Even so, half-blind as I am without my glasses, I never swim or surf without a friend to scan the waves. I remember too well my father's white face getting whiter against the sand, my mother in a panic, me crying, thinking he was dead.

The rows of fiery welts on his legs and back lasted into next spring.

v

I just heard a lecture called "Confusion in Sexual Identity: The Search for a Model." Some guys have it bad. If I was ever confused that way, it stopped that day, age five. I was sitting on Dad's shoulders surf-fishing and wave-jumping, both of us in swim-trunks. I saw a rainbow balloon float by and started to show Dad just as he flinched once and, without even scaring me, waded the 50 yards to shore and gently set me down.

A FAT MAN AND A POOL CUE

were arguing in a bar. The fat man had lost 30 bucks plus considerable face in a grudge match, and blamed his warped cue. The cue felt it had been incompetently used, made to look bad, then raked over the coals for a handicap which was minor compared to many, and which the fat man had caused anyway by storing it improperly.

"I'll use you for a rug beater," hissed the fat man.

"I'll flatten your pig's-nose," snarled the cue.

"I'll break you into toothpicks."

"I'll pop your kidneys like water-balloons."

"I'll make you into a cane and give you to a blind leper."

"I'll crush your balls into putty."

"I'll nail you to a wall, and people will think you're an S."

"I'll ream out your colon, and people will think you're a rotten-apple-on-a-stick."

There was a silence. Then the fat man sighed. "Look, we're both wrong. Let's call this a draw. Forgive and forget. Ok?"

The pool cue smiled. "Ya know, if you hadn't said it, I was going to."

The two strolled outside, cue cradled in fat palm.

"Pals again?" the cue asked, watching for a truck to throw the fat man in front of.

"You bet!" the fat man said, sidling toward an incinerator which had winked at him that very afternoon.

SUMMER-SWITCH

I'm slogging through brown snow under a trashcan-gray sky, and there's this one dry little twig sticking out of a telephone pole and I push it down to try and break it off and suddenly summer runs up like a girl in a blue bikini chasing an orange beachball which stops right by my feet. And leaves and flowers and bumble bees are all at once there. And two boys in baseball hats whip by on their bikes. And my nose stops running.

I'm standing in the grass trying to figure all this out, still twisting the twig absentmindedly, when it pulls off and winter comes crashing back down.

-- Charles Webb

Seattle WA

30 DAYS AT HARD LABOR

First we throw our timepieces away. At the first dawn we are expected to hold all our rejoicing in our breasts. By sunset we must carry all our losses. At night we are forbidden to weep. They say the days get longer here, and that you never quite get used to it.